

Message Text

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42 61

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-11 SAB-01 AID-05 OPR-02 SCCT-01

AF-06 /089 W

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O R 152034Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9027

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR

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(CORRECTED COPY PARA 3 & 4)

3.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, LE

SUBJ: THREAT OF MILITARY ESCALATION EASES: POLITICAL BARGAINING

AT CENTER STATE

1. PASSING OF 1400 HOURS DEADLINE WITHOUT ANY MILITARY MOVE
AGAINST PALACE HAS BROUGHT SOME RELIEF TO TENSION IN BEIRUT.
MOST OBSERVERS NOW BELIEVE DANGER OF MILITARY ESCALATION HAS PASSED
FOR TIME BEING AT LEAST. BUT RUMORS OF TROOP MOVEMENTS
ARE SWIRLING THROUGH CAPITAL. IN ADDITION TO KHATIB'S FORCES
SAID TO BE IN MOUNTAINS ABOVE BEIRUT, THERE IS REPORT OF KHATIB
FORCE MOVING ON CAPITAL FROM SOUTH. IT IS SAID TO BE HALTED
NEAR BEIRUT AIRPORT, WITH EITHER PLA OR SAIQA UNITS BLOCKING WAY.
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DURING AFTERNOON MARCH 15, WILD REPORTS OF "SYRIAN TROOPS"

CROSSING INTO LEBANON CIRCUCLATED. BY EVENING, RUMOR MILL HAD
TURNED THESE INTO PLA (OR AT ANY RATE; PLA, UNIFORMED)
TROOPS NOW CAMPING MOSTLY IN BEKAA. AS YET WE ARE UNABLE
TO CONFIRM OR REFUTE THIS REPORT.

2. MAIN NEWS AFTERNOON MARCH 15 WAS ANNOUNCEMENT BY BOTH
AL-AHDAB AND KHATIB THAT THEIR MOVEMENTS HAD MERGED. THE MERGER
IS ON BASIS OF PROGRAM TO UNIFY ARMY AND CLEAR IT OF CON-
FESSIONALISM. PROGRAM URGES NEW ARMY LAW AS WELL AS BALANCED
COMMAND STRUCTURE AT TOP.

3. POLITICAL NEGOTIATION CONTINUING IN WHAT ONE DEPUTY CALLED
"BYZANTINE" ATMOSPHERE. RENEWED SYRIAN INVOLVEMENT IS IN CENTER OF
INTEREST. KHATEAB DELEGATION UNDER PAKRADOUNI IS IN DAMASCUS
AND SHIITE IMAM MUSA SADR IS THERE AS WELL. THERE ARE CONFLICTING
REPORTS ON WHETHER KHADDAM WILL COME HERE.

4. BELIEF BECOMING WIDE SPREAD THAT KATIEB SUPPORT FOR FRANGIE
ANNOUNCED MARCH 14 WAS DELIBERATELY NUANCED. ONE THEORY IS THAT

BOTH KATIEB AND CHAMOUN FEARED THAT RAYMOND EDDE LIKELY WIN
PRESIDENCY WITH LEFTIST BACKING. IF FRANGIE WERE TO
RESIGN AN DELECTION HELD NOW, KATIEB REALISES FRANGIE MUST GO,
BUT WANTS SUCCESS OR OTHER THAN EDDE AGREED TO IN ADVANCE,
ACCORDING TO VARIATION OF THIS THEORY, FRANGIE IS HOLDING ON
TO PRESIDENCY FOR SIMILAR MOTIVE; HE TOO KNOWS HE IS ON
WAY OUT, BUT DISTRUSTS EDDE AS SUCCESSOR. ELIAS SARKIS
IS MENTIONED AS PREFERRED CANDIDATE OF BOTH KATIEB AND FRANGIE.
SARKIS ALSO SAID TO HAVE ARMY SUPPORT. THIS VERSION OF
CURRENT BARGAINING IS BEING PURVEYED, NOT UNEXPECTEDLY, BY
CHEHABISTS. WHETHER TRUE OR NOW IT TELLS MUCH ABOUT POLITICAL
ATMOSPHERE.

5. THERE IS A LATE WIRE SERVICE STORY THAT FRANGIE HAS SAID HE
WILL RESIGN IF DIGNIFIED WAY IS FOUND TO ACCOMPLISH HI
DEPARTURE. THE PRO-FRANGIE RADIO AND SEVERAL BEIRUT NEWS PAPERS
ARE APPARENTLY DENYING THIS REPORT.
LAMBRAKIS

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